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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 17, 2005

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Soft Cheeses Made from Raw Milk Can Cause Serious Diseases

The Food and Drug Administration and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare advise people to avoid soft cheeses made with raw, unpasteurized milk. Unpasteurized soft cheeses can cause infectious diseases, such as listeriosis, brucellosis, salmonellosis and tuberculosis. People in high risk groups that include pregnant women, newborns, older adults and people with weakened immune systems are especially vulnerable to diseases caused by unpasteurized soft cheeses.

Soft cheeses are usually spreadable cheeses and frequently spoil faster than firmer cheeses. The unpasteurized soft cheeses of most concern originate in Mexico, Nicaragua and Honduras. Some of the most popular kinds of soft cheeses include Queso Panela, Asadero, Blanco and Ranchero.

To protect your health, consumers are advised to check the labels on soft cheeses to make sure the product is made from pasteurized milk. People should avoid buying unpasteurized soft cheeses from flea markets, sellers operating door-to-door or out of their trucks, or shipped or carried in luggage to them from Mexico, Nicaragua, or Honduras. Most soft cheeses sold in state grocery stores are made from pasteurized milk, although consumers should always check the label to be certain.

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(Editors: For more information please contact Idaho Food Protection Program Manager Patrick Guzzle at 334-5936)